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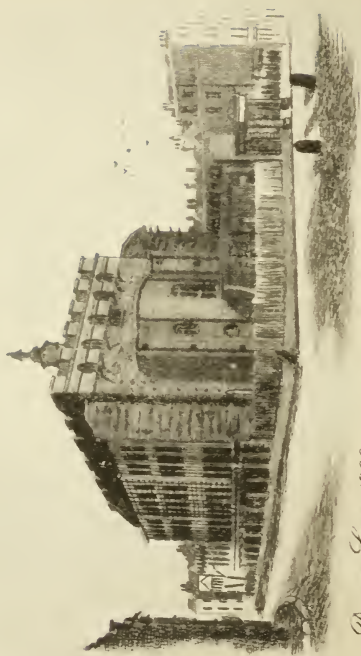




THE TEMPLE DRAMATISTS

Sheridan's THE CRITIC





Druce Lane 1809.



THE CRITIC
OR
A TRAGEDY REHEARSED

A Farce written by
RICHARD BRINSLEY
SHERIDAN

Edited with Preface and Notes
by
G. A. AITKEN

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Preface.

History of the Play. Sheridan's farce, *The Critic, or a Tragedy Rehearsed*, was brought out on the 30th of October 1779, when the author, then aged twenty-eight, was manager of Drury Lane Theatre; and its wit has kept it alive to this day, though many of the personal allusions have long since ceased to be understood by the reader. There is the usual story of Sheridan's procrastination. We are told that two days before the play was to be produced the last scene was unfinished, and that it was only by inveigling Sheridan into the green-room, where there was a fire, wine and supper, stationery, and the incomplete manuscript, and then locking him in, that he was brought to finish the work. It is said that he laughed heartily at the joke; certainly he was not loth to have such stories told, for he liked it to be thought that his brilliant scenes were thrown off without any of the care which, in reality, he bestowed upon them. *The Critic* was not printed until 1781, when, unlike Sheridan's other plays, it was published with the author's approval. The original edition has an engraved title-page, which was afterwards used, without modification, in later issues; the genuine first issue can thus only be distinguished by examining the watermarks in the paper.

Parsons, as Sir Fretful Plagiary, the author; Miss Pope, as the tragedy heroine Tilburina; and Bannister as Don Ferolo Whiskerandos, were among the chief successes of the original cast. In later days the names of Farren and Charles Matthews have been associated with the play, and many changes have been introduced

on the stage in order to bring the satire up to date. Matthews published in *Tinsley's Magazine* for November 1872 a defence of the system of "gags" which he and others introduced into the piece with the view of suiting it to a modern audience. Unfortunately *The Critic* is now rarely acted in public, and never in its original form.

In drawing the character of Sir Fretful Plagiary, Sheridan had in mind the dramatist Richard Cumberland, who had prefixed to his play, *The Choleric Man*, a Dedication to Detraction. Cumberland was sensitive, vain, and envious. In one of his letters to Garrick he complains of Sheridan's neglect when one of Cumberland's tragedies was being read to the actors: "It gave me not the slightest offence, as I put it all to the habit of dissipation and indolence." There is a well-known tale that when Cumberland and his family witnessed the first performance of *The School for Scandal*, Cumberland asked his children what they found to laugh at, adding, in an undertone, "keep still, you little dunces!" When Sheridan heard of this incident he said, "It was ungrateful of Cumberland to have been displeased with his children for laughing at my comedy, for when I went to see his tragedy I laughed from beginning to end." There are other versions of the story, and it is only fair to add that Cumberland's first tragedy was not acted until 1778, a year after *The School for Scandal*, and that he denied that he was present at the first performance of Sheridan's play. The original of Dangle is said to have been a Mr Vaughan, who had busied himself in the affairs of the Richmond Theatre, and had written letters in the *Morning Post*. George Colman had ridiculed him, under the name of Dapper, in the papers called *The Genius* (1761-2). Among the plays satirised by Sheridan was John Home's *Fatal*

Discovery, one of the bombastic tragedies which were rendered obsolete by the wit of *The Critic*. One such piece, William Hodson's *Zoraida*, brought out in 1780, ran for eight nights only, because its heroine at once recalled Tilburina to the audience. Mad heroines who raved in white silk were no longer possible on the stage.

Between the production of *The Critic* on the stage and its publication, two skits appeared. In one of those pieces *The Critic, or a Tragedy Rehearsed*, "a new dramatic piece in three acts, by the author of the *Duenna*," 1780, the names of Sheridan's characters are borrowed, and applied to the purposes of political satire. The other piece, *The Critick anticipated; or, The Humours of the Green Room*, a Farce, by R. B. S., Esq., 1779, is a personal attack on Sheridan, with a dedication to the actors at Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Sheridan appears as Young Psalter, his father as Old Psalter, and his wife as Mrs Psalter; and there are various allusions to the elder Sheridan's work as teacher of elocution and compiler of dictionaries. A newspaper paragraph is read to the effect that Sheridan had been detected pilfering from scenes of different authors left in his custody for representation; and that the authoress of a tragedy called *The Woeful Countess* was greatly enraged at the manager's conduct. It will be remembered that Sheridan himself laughed in *The Critic* at the charge that he stole from plays forwarded to him as manager. Sir Fretful says he will never send a play to Drury Lane; "it is not always so safe to leave a play in the hands of those that write themselves"; they may steal, "and, egad, serve your best thoughts as gipsies do stolen children, disfigure them to make 'em pass for their own." A dexterous plagiarist may do anything. Why, sir, for aught I know, he might take out

some of the best things in my tragedy and put them into his own comedy."

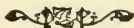
Forerunners of "The Critic." Sheridan's *Critic* is in one sense less original than either *The Rivals* or *The School for Scandal*, but a charge of plagiarism is as misplaced in the one instance as in the other. There had, of course, been several plays ridiculing the rant and fustian of conventional tragedy, among the best of them being Henry Carey's burlesque, *Chrononhotonthologos*, and Fielding's *Tragedy of Tragedies, or, The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great*; and the rehearsal of a play, often with humorous references to the author's difficulties with the actors, had been a common theme. In Beaumont and Fletcher's *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, Ralph the apprentice acted the part of a quixotic knight, to the admiration of his master and mistress, who were seated on the stage; and Garrick had produced, in 1767, his successful *A Peep behind the Curtain, or, The New Rehearsal*. Sheridan had himself written, while a lad, in collaboration with his friend Halhed, a farce called *Jupiter*, in the form of a rehearsal, with an author, Simile, who is suggestive of Puff. Fielding used the idea of a rehearsal several times, and notably in *Pasquin*, in which two plays are rehearsed, one a tragedy, the other a comedy, in the presence of their self-satisfied authors, and of a critic, Sneerwell, who reminds the reader of Sheridan's Sneer. Another piece of Fielding's dealing with a rehearsal, *The Historical Register for the year 1736*, has a character, Dangle, whose name Sheridan used in *The Critic*. There are, too, in this piece, four Patriots who shake their heads significantly, like Sheridan's Lord Burleigh. The play, however, which most resembles Sheridan's is the Duke of Buckingham's *Rehearsal*, published in

1672. Bayes, the author in that piece, is a satire upon Dryden, but works by other dramatists are burlesqued, and later editions contained many "gags" relating to plays produced after the first appearance of the *Rehearsal*. Notwithstanding, however, the general likeness between this admirable farce and Sheridan's *Critic*, the passages in which Sheridan was directly indebted to the earlier piece are very few in number. Sir Fretful Plagiary had a common-place book, said to contain passages stolen from obscure volumes (I. i. 446), and Bayes kept a book of "Drama common-places, the mother of many other plays," in which he recorded witty sayings heard in coffee-houses, and passages from other authors. The appearance of the Thames, with the attendant banks (III. i. 316) may be compared with the eclipse in the fifth act of the *Rehearsal*, effected by means of a dance between the sun, moon and earth. When Raleigh and Hatton enter (II. ii. 30), Hatton says, "True, gallant Raleigh!" and upon Dangle asking "What, they had been talking before?" Puff replies, "O yes, all the way as they came along." Similarly, in Act II. of the *Rehearsal*, the Physician says to the Gentleman Usher, "Sir, to conclude," and when Smith exclaims, "What, before he begins?" Bayes replies, "No, sir, you must know they had been talking of this a pretty while without." Puff's "Now then for my magnificence! my battle! my noise! and my procession!" (III. i. 301) recalls Bayes's "Now, gentlemen, I will be bold to say, I'll show you the greatest scene that ever England saw; I mean not for words, for those I do not value; but for state, show, and magnificence." But such occasional reminiscences of the earlier play are far from justifying a charge of plagiarism. Sheridan's indebtedness does not extend beyond the general idea of a satire on bad plays through the medium of a

rehearsal; and the brilliant first act, with the account of the art of puffing, the attack on sentimental comedy ("nothing ridiculous from the beginning to the end"), the sketches of Dangle, the would-be stage Mæcenas, Sir Fretful Plagiary, the author, Sneer and Puff, is wholly Sheridan's.

Sheridan's Life. A sketch of the author's life has been given in the Introduction to *The School for Scandal*, in this series; but it may be well to say here that Richard Brinsley Sheridan, son of the actor and writer Thomas Sheridan, and the novelist Frances Sheridan, was born in Dublin on October 30, 1751. After school days at Harrow, Sheridan lived with his family at Bath, and in 1773 he concluded a romantic marriage with the singer, Eliza Ann Linley. Two years later came *The Rivals* followed by a farce, *St Patrick's Day*, and a successful comic opera, *The Duenna*. In 1776 Sheridan and his friends bought Garrick's share in Drury Lane Theatre, but nothing more important than *A Trip to Scarborough*, an adaptation from Vanbrugh, was produced by the new manager until May 1777, when *The School for Scandal* was first acted. *The Critic, or a Tragedy Rehearsed* (1779) was really Sheridan's last play, though he afterwards brought out *Pizarro*, a translation or adaptation from Kotzebue. In 1780 he was elected member of parliament for Stafford, and at the age of twenty-nine began a new and brilliant career as statesman and orator. During the impeachment of Warren Hastings he delivered his famous speeches respecting the princesses of Oude; but before long, financial and other troubles began to weigh heavily upon him, and he fell under the malign influence of the Prince of Wales, afterwards George IV. In 1809 Drury Lane Theatre, then recently built, was burnt down, and soon afterwards

Sheridan lost his seat in parliament. At the time of his death (July 7. 1816) Sheridan was hard pressed by creditors, though his debts seem not to have exceeded £4000, and the Regent and others sent money at the last moment, on hearing of his position. A few days later he was buried with great ceremony in Westminster Abbey.



THE CRITIC
OR
A TRAGEDY REHEARSED

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

AS ORIGINALLY ACTED AT DRURY LANE THEATRE IN 1779.

SIR FRETFUL PLAGIARY	<i>Mr Parsons.</i>
PUFF	<i>Mr King.</i>
DANGLE	<i>Mr Dodd.</i>
SNEER	<i>Mr Palmer.</i>
SIGNOR PASTICCIO RITORNELLO	<i>Mr Delpini.</i>
INTERPRETER	<i>Mr Badaeley.</i>
UNDER PROMPTER	<i>Mr Phillimore.</i>
MR HOPKINS	<i>Mr Hopkins.</i>
MRS DANGLE	<i>Mrs Hopkins.</i>
SIGNORE PASTICCIO RITORNELLO	{ <i>Miss Field and the</i> <i>Miss Abrams.</i>

Scenemen, Musicians, and Servants.

CHARACTERS OF THE TRAGEDY.

LORD BURLEIGH	<i>Mr Moody.</i>
GOVERNOR OF TILBURY FORT	<i>Mr Wrighten.</i>
EARL OF LEICESTER	<i>Mr Farren.</i>
SIR WALTER RALEIGH	<i>Mr Burton.</i>
SIR CHRISTOPHER HATTON	<i>Mr Waldron.</i>
MASTER OF THE HORSE	<i>Mr Kenny.</i>
DON FEROL WHISKERANDOS	<i>Mr Bannister, jun.</i>
BEEFEATER	<i>Mr Wright.</i>
JUSTICE	<i>Mr Packer.</i>
SON	<i>Mr Lamash.</i>
CONSTABLE	<i>Mr Fawcett.</i>
THAMES	<i>Mr Gaudry.</i>
TILBURINA	<i>Miss Pope.</i>
CONFIDANT	<i>Mrs Bradshaw.</i>
JUSTICE'S LADY	<i>Mrs Johnston.</i>
FIRST NIECE	<i>Miss Collett.</i>
SECOND NIECE	<i>Miss Kirby.</i>

Knights, Guards, Constables, Sentinels, Servants, Chorus,
Rivers, Attendants, &c., &c.

SCENE: London—in Dangle's House during the First Act, and
throughout the rest of the play in Drury Lane Theatre.

TO MRS GREVILLE.

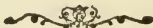
MADAM,—In requesting your permission to address the following pages to you, which, as they aim themselves to be critical, require every protection and allowance that approving taste or friendly prejudice can give them, I yet ventured to mention no other motive than the gratification of private friendship and esteem. Had I suggested a hope that your implied approbation would give a sanction to their defects, your particular reserve, and dislike to the reputation of critical taste, as well as of poetical talent, would have made you refuse the protection of your name to such a purpose. However, I am not so ungrateful as now to attempt to combat this disposition in you. I shall not here presume to argue that the present state of poetry claims and expects every assistance that taste and example can afford it; nor endeavour to prove that a fastidious concealment of the most elegant productions of judgment and fancy is an ill return for the possession of those endowments. Continue to deceive yourself in the idea that you are known only to be eminently admired and regarded for the valuable qualities that attach private

To Mrs Greville.

≡ The Critic

friendships, and the graceful talents that adorn conversation. Enough of what you have written has stolen into full public notice to answer my purpose; and you will, perhaps, be the only person, conversant in elegant literature, who shall read this address and not perceive that by publishing your particular approbation of the following drama, I have a more interested object than to boast the true respect and regard with which I have the honour to be, Madam, your very sincere and obedient humble servant,

R. B. SHERIDAN.



The Critic;
Or, A Tragedy Rehearsed.

Prologue.

BY THE HONOURABLE RICHARD FITZPATRICK.

THE sister Muses, whom these realms obey,
Who o'er the drama hold divided sway,
Sometimes, by evil counsellors, 'tis said,
Like earth-born potentates have been misled.
In those gay days of wickedness and wit,
When Villiers criticised what Dryden writ,
The tragic queen, to please a tasteless crowd,
Had learned to bellow, rant, and roar so loud,
That frightened Nature, her best friend before,
The blustering beldam's company forswore ; 10
Her comic sister, who had wit 'tis true,
With all her merits, had her failings too ;
And would sometimes in mirthful moments use
A style too flippant for a well-bred Muse ;

Then female modesty abashed began
 To seek the friendly refuge of the fan,
 A while behind that slight intrenchment stood,
 Till driven from thence, she left the stage for good.
 In our more pious, and far chaster times,
 These sure no longer are the Muse's crimes! 20
 But some complain that, former faults to shun,
 The reformation to extremes has run.
 The frantic hero's wild delirium past,
 Now insipidity succeeds bombast ;
 So slow Melpomene's cold numbers creep,
 Here dulness seems her drowsy court to keep,
 And we are scarce awake, whilst you are fast asleep.
 Thalia, once so ill-behaved and rude,
 Reformed, is now become an arrant prude ;
 Retailing nightly to the yawning pit 30
 The purest morals, undefiled by wit !
 Our author offers, in these motley scenes,
 A slight remonstrance to the drama's queens :
 Nor let the goddesses be over nice ;
 Free-spoken subjects give the best advice.
 Although not quite a novice in his trade,
 His cause to-night requires no common aid.
 To this, a friendly, just, and powerful court,
 I come ambassador to beg support.

Can he undaunted brave the critic's rage? 40
 In civil broils with brother bards engage?
 Hold forth their errors to the public eye,
 Nay more, e'en newspapers themselves defy?
 Say, must his single arm encounter all?
 By numbers vanquished, e'en the brave may fall;
 And though no leader should success distrust,
 Whose troops are willing, and whose cause is just;
 To bid such hosts of angry foes defiance,
 His chief dependence must be, your alliance.

Act First.

Scene I.

A Room in Dangle's House.

Mr and Mrs Dangle discovered at breakfast, and reading newspapers.

Dang. [Reading.] *Brutus to Lord North.*—Letter the second on the State of the Army—Psha! To the first L dash D of the A dash Y.—Genuine extract of a Letter from St Kitts.—Coxbeath Intelligence.—It is now confidently asserted that Sir Charles Hardy—Psha! nothing but about

the fleet and the nation!—and I hate all politics but theatrical politics.—Where's the Morning Chronicle?

Mrs Dāng. Yes, that's your Gazette. 10

Dang. So, here we have it.—[Reads.] *Theatrical intelligence extraordinary.*—*We hear there is a new tragedy in rehearsal at Drury Lane Theatre, called the Spanish Armada, said to be written by Mr Puff, a gentleman well known in the theatrical world. If we may allow ourselves to give credit to the report of the performers, who, truth to say, are in general but indifferent judges, this piece abounds with the most striking and received beauties of modern composition.*—So! I am very glad my friend Puff's tragedy is in such forwardness.—Mrs Dangle, my dear, you will be very glad to hear that Puff's tragedy—— 20

Mrs Dang. Lord, Mr Dangle, why will you plague me about such nonsense?—Now the plays are begun I shall have no peace.—Isn't it sufficient to make yourself ridiculous by your passion for the theatre, without continually teasing me to join you? Why can't you ride your hobby-horse without desiring to place me on a pillion behind you, Mr Dangle? 30

Dang. Nay, my dear, I was only going to read—

Mrs Dang. No, no; you will never read any thing that's worth listening to. You hate to hear about your country; there are letters every day with Roman signatures, demonstrating the certainty of an invasion, and proving that the nation is utterly undone. But you never will read any thing to entertain one.

Dang. What has a woman to do with politics, Mrs Dangle? 40

Mrs Dang. And what have you to do with the theatre, Mr Dangle? Why should you affect the character of a critic? I have no patience with you!—Haven't you made yourself the jest of all your acquaintance by your interference in matters where you have no business? Are you not called a theatrical quidnunc, and a mock Mæcenas to second-hand authors?

Dang. True;—my power with the managers is pretty notorious. But is it no credit to have applications from all quarters for my interest—from lords to recommend fiddlers, from ladies to get boxes, from authors to get answers, and from actors to get engagements? 50

Mrs Dang. Yes, truly; you have contrived to get a

share in all the plague and trouble of theatrical property, without the profit, or even the credit of the abuse that attends it.

Dang. I am sure, Mrs Dangle, you are no loser by it, however; you have all the advantages of it. Mightn't you, last winter, have had the reading of the new pantomime a fortnight previous to its performance? And doesn't Mr Fosbrook let you take places for a play before it is advertised, and set you down for a box for every new piece through the season? And didn't my friend, Mr Smatter, dedicate his last farce to you at my particular request, Mrs Dangle? 60

Mrs Dang. Yes; but wasn't the farce damned, Mr Dangle? And to be sure it is extremely pleasant to have one's house made the motley rendezvous of all the lackeys of literature; the very high 'Change of trading authors and jobbing critics?—Yes, my drawing-room is an absolute register office for candidate actors, and poets without character.—Then to be continually alarmed with misses and ma'ams pipping hysteric changes on Juliets and Dorindas, Pollys, and Ophelias; and the very furniture 70
80
trembling at the probationary starts and un-

provoked rants of would-be Richards and Hamlets!—And what is worse than all, now that the manager has monopolized the Opera House, haven't we the signors and signoras calling here, sliding their smooth semibreves, and gargling glib divisions in their outlandish throats—with foreign emissaries and French spies, for aught I know, disguised like fiddlers and figure-dancers?

90

Dang. Mercy! Mrs Dangle!

Mrs Dang. And to employ yourself so idly at such an alarming crisis as this too—when, if you had the least spirit, you would have been at the head of one of the Westminster associations—or trailing a volunteer pike in the Artillery Ground! But you—o' my conscience, I believe, if the French were landed to-morrow, your first inquiry would be, whether they had brought a theatrical troop with them.

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Dang. Mrs Dangle, it does not signify—I say the stage is *the Mirror of Nature*, and the actors are *the abstract and brief chronicles of the time*: and pray what can a man of sense study better?—Besides, you will not easily persuade me that there is no credit or importance in

being at the head of a band of critics, who take upon them to decide for the whole town, whose opinion and patronage all writers solicit, and whose recommendation no manager dares 110 refuse.

Mrs Dang. Ridiculous! — Both managers and authors of the least merit laugh at your pretensions.—The public is their critic—without whose fair approbation they know no play can rest on the stage, and with whose applause they welcome such attacks as yours, and laugh at the malice of them, where they can't at the wit.

Dang. Very well, madam—very well!

Enter Servant.

Ser. Mr Sneer, sir, to wait on you. 120

Dang. Oh, show Mr Sneer up.—[*Exit Servant.*]
Plague on't, now we must appear loving and affectionate, or Sneer will hitch us into a story.

Mrs Dang. With all my heart; you can't be more ridiculous than you are.

Dang. You are enough to provoke——

Enter Sneer.

Ha! my dear Sneer, I am vastly glad to see you.—My dear, here's Mr Sneer.

Mrs Dang. Good morning to you, sir.

Dang. Mrs Dangle and I have been diverting 130
ourselves with the papers. Pray, Sneer, won't
you go to Drury Lane Theatre the first night
of Puff's tragedy?

Sneer. Yes; but I suppose one shan't be able to get
in, for on the first night of a new piece they
always fill the house with orders to support it.
But here, Dangle, I have brought you two
pieces, one of which you must exert yourself
to make the managers accept, I can tell you
that; for 'tis written by a person of con- 140
sequence.

Dang. So! now my plagues are beginning.

Sneer. Ay, I am glad of it, for now you'll be
happy. Why, my dear Dangle, it is a pleasure
to see how you enjoy your volunteer fatigue,
and your solicited solicitations.

Dang. It's a great trouble—yet, egad, it's pleasant
too.—Why, sometimes of a morning I have a
dozen people call on me at breakfast-time,
whose faces I never saw before, nor ever desire 150
to see again.

Sneer. That must be very pleasant indeed!

Dang. And not a week but I receive fifty letters,

and not a line in them about any business of my own.

Sneer. An amusing correspondence!

Dang. [Reading.] *Bursts into tears, and exit.*—

What, is this a tragedy?

Sneer. No, that's a genteel comedy, not a translation—only taken from the French: it is written in 160
a style which they have lately tried to run down; the true sentimental, and nothing ridiculous in it from the beginning to the end.

Mrs Dang. Well, if they had kept to that, I should not have been such an enemy to the stage; there was some edification to be got from those pieces, Mr Sneer!

Sneer. I am quite of your opinion, Mrs Dangle: the theatre, in proper hands, might certainly be made the school of morality; but now, I am 170
sorry to say it, people seem to go there principally for their entertainment!

Mrs Dang. It would have been more to the credit of the managers to have kept it in the other line.

Sneer. Undoubtedly, madam; and hereafter perhaps to have had it recorded, that in the midst of a luxurious and dissipated age, they preserved two

houses in the capital, where the conversation
was always moral at least, if not entertaining! 180

Dang. Now, egad, I think the worst alteration is
in the nicety of the audience!—No *double-*
entendre, no smart innuendo admitted; even
Vanbrugh and Congreve obliged to undergo a
bungling reformation!

Sneer. Yes, and our prudery in this respect is just
on a par with the artificial bashfulness of a
courtesan, who increases the blush upon her
cheek in an exact proportion to the diminution
of her modesty. 190

Dang. Sneer can't even give the public a good
word! But what have we here?—This seems
a very odd——

Sneer. Oh, that's a comedy, on a very new plan;
replete with wit and mirth, yet of a most serious
moral! You see it is called *The Reformed*
House-breaker; where, by the mere force of
humour, house-breaking is put into so ridiculous
a light, that if the piece has its proper run, I
have no doubt but that bolts and bars will be 200
entirely useless by the end of the season.

Dang. Egad, this is new indeed!

Sneer. Yes; it is written by a particular friend of

mine, who has discovered that the follies and foibles of society are subjects unworthy the notice of the comic muse, who should be taught to stoop only at the greater vices and blacker crimes of humanity—gibbeting capital offences in five acts, and pillorying petty larcenies in two.—In short, his idea is to dramatise the 210 penal laws, and make the stage a court of ease to the Old Bailey

Dang. It is truly moral.

Re-enter Servant

Ser. Sir Fretful Plagiary, sir.

Dang. Beg him to walk up.—[*Exit Servant.*]

Now, Mrs Dangle, Sir Fretful Plagiary is an author to your own taste.

Mrs Dang. I confess he is a favourite of mine, because everybody else abuses him.

Sneer. Very much to the credit of your charity, 220 madam, if not of your judgment.

Dang. But, egad, he allows no merit to any author but himself, that's the truth on't—though he's my friend.

Sneer. Never.—He is as envious as an old maid verging on the desperation of six-and-thirty ;

and then the insidious humility with which he seduces you to give a free opinion on any of his works, can be exceeded only by the petulant arrogance with which he is sure to reject your 230 observations.

Dang. Very true, egad—though he's my friend.

Sneer. Then his affected contempt of all newspaper strictures; though, at the same time, he is the sorest man alive, and shrinks like scorched parchment from the fiery ordeal of true criticism: yet is he so covetous of popularity, that he had rather be abused than not mentioned at all.

Dang. There's no denying it—though he is my friend. 240

Sneer. You have read the tragedy he has just finished, haven't you?

Dang. O yes; he sent it to me yesterday.

Sneer. Well, and you think it execrable, don't you?

Dang. Why, between ourselves, egad, I must own—though he is my friend—that it is one of the most——He's here—[*Aside*]—finished and most admirable perform——

Sir Fret. [*Without.*] Mr Sneer with him, did you 250 say?

Enter Sir Fretful Plagiary.

Dang. Ah, my dear friend!—Egad, we were just speaking of your tragedy.—Admirable, Sir Fretful, admirable!

Sneer. You never did any thing beyond it, Sir Fretful—never in your life.

Sir Fret. You make me extremely happy; for without a compliment, my dear Sneer, there isn't a man in the world whose judgment I value as I do yours and Mr Dangle's. 260

Mrs Dang. They are only laughing at you, Sir Fretful; for it was but just now that——

Dang. Mrs Dangle!—Ah, Sir Fretful, you know Mrs Dangle.—My friend Sneer was rallying just now:—he knows how she admires you, and——

Sir Fret. O Lord, I am sure Mr Sneer has more taste and sincerity than to——[*Aside*] A damned double-faced fellow!

Dang. Yes, yes—Sneer will jest—but a better- 270
humoured——

Sir Fret. Oh, I know——

Dang. He has a ready turn for ridicule—his wit costs him nothing.

Sir Fret. No, egad—or I should wonder how he came by it. [*Aside.*

Mrs Dang. Because his jest is always at the expense of his friend. [*Aside.*

Dang. But, Sir Fretful, have you sent your play to the managers yet?—or can I be of any service 280 to you?

Sir Fret. No, no, I thank you: I believe the piece had sufficient recommendation with it.—I thank you though.—I sent it to the manager of Covent Garden Theatre this morning.

Sneer. I should have thought now, that it might have been cast (as the actors call it) better at Drury Lane.

Sir Fret. O lud! no—never send a play there while I live—hark'ee! [*Whispers Sneer.* 290

Sneer. Writes himself!—I know he does.

Sir Fret. I say nothing—I take away from no man's merit—am hurt at no man's good fortune—I say nothing.—But this I will say—through all my knowledge of life, I have observed—that there is not a passion so strongly rooted in the human heart as envy.

Sneer. I believe you have reason for what you say, indeed.

Sir Fret. Besides—I can tell you it is not always 300
so safe to leave a play in the hands of those who
write themselves.

Sneer. What, they may steal from them, hey, my
dear Plagiary?

Sir Fret. Steal!—to be sure they may; and, egad,
serve your best thoughts as gypsies do stolen
children, disfigure them to make 'em pass for
their own.

Sneer. But your present work is a sacrifice to
Melpomene, and he, you know, never—— 310

Sir Fret. That's no security: a dexterous plagiarist
may do any thing. Why, sir, for aught I
know, he might take out some of the best
things in my tragedy, and put them into his
own comedy.

Sneer. That might be done, I dare be sworn.

Sir Fret. And then, if such a person gives you the
least hint or assistance, he is devilish apt to
take the merit of the whole——

Dang. If it succeeds. 320

Sir Fret. Ay, but with regard to this piece, I think
I can hit that gentleman, for I can safely swear
he never read it.

Sneer. I'll tell you how you may hurt him more.

Sir Fret. How?

Sneer. Swear he wrote it.

Sir Fret. Plague on 't now, Sneer, I shall take it ill!
—I believe you want to take away my character
as an author.

Sneer. Then I am sure you ought to be very much 330
obliged to me.

Sir Fret. Hey!—sir!—

Dang. Oh, you know, he never means what he says.

Sir Fret. Sincerely then—you do like the piece?

Sneer. Wonderfully!

Sir Fret. But come now, there must be something
that you think might be mended, hey?—Mr
Dangle, has nothing struck you?

Dang. Why, faith, it is but an ungracious thing, for
the most part, to—

340

Sir Fret. With most authors it is just so indeed;
they are in general strangely tenacious! But,
for my part, I am never so well pleased as when
a judicious critic points out any defect to me;
for what is the purpose of showing a work to a
friend, if you don't mean to profit by his
opinion?

Sneer. Very true.—Why then, though I seriously
admire the piece upon the whole, yet there is

one small objection, which, if you'll give me 350
leave, I'll mention.

Sir Fret. Sir, you can't oblige me more.

Sneer. I think it wants incident.

Sir Fret. Good God! you surprise me!—wants
incident!

Sneer. Yes; I own I think the incidents are too
few.

Sir Fret. Good God! Believe me, Mr Sneer, there
is no person for whose judgment I have a more
implicit deference; but I protest to you, Mr 360
Sneer, I am only apprehensive that the incidents
are too crowded.—My dear Dangle, how does
it strike you?

Dang. Really I can't agree with my friend Sneer.
I think the plot quite sufficient; and the four
first acts by many degrees the best I ever read
or saw in my life. If I might venture to
suggest any thing, it is that the interest rather
falls off in the fifth.

Sir Fret. Rises, I believe you mean, sir. 370

Dang. No, I don't, upon my word.

Sir Fret. Yes, yes, you do, upon my soul!—it
certainly don't fall off, I assure you.—No, no;
it don't fall off.

Dang. Now, Mrs Dangle, didn't you say it struck you in the same light?

Mrs Dang. No, indeed, I did not—I did not see a fault in any part of the play, from the beginning to the end.

Sir Fret. Upon my soul, the women are the best judges after all! 380

Mrs Dang. Or, if I made any objection, I am sure it was to nothing in the piece, but that I was afraid it was, on the whole, a little too long.

Sir Fret. Pray, madam, do you speak as to duration of time; or do you mean that the story is tediously spun out?

Mrs Dang. O lud! no.—I speak only with reference to the usual length of acting plays.

Sir Fret. Then I am very happy—very happy indeed—because the play is a short play, a remarkably short play. I should not venture to differ with a lady on a point of taste; but, on these occasions, the watch, you know, is the critic. 390

Mrs Dang. Then, I suppose, it must have been Mr Dangle's drawling manner of reading it to me.

Sir Fret. Oh, if Mr Dangle read it, that's quite another affair!—But I assure you, Mrs Dangle,

the first evening you can spare me three hours 400
and a half, I'll undertake to read you the whole
from beginning to end, with the prologue and
epilogue, and allow time for the music between
the acts.

Mrs Dang. I hope to see it on the stage next.

Dang. Well, Sir Fretful, I wish you may be able
to get rid as easily of the newspaper criticisms
as you do of ours.

Sir Fret. The newspapers! Sir, they are the most
villanous—licentious—abominable—infernal— 410
Not that I ever read them—no—I make it a
rule never to look into a newspaper.

Dang. You are quite right; for it certainly must
hurt an author of delicate feelings to see the
liberties they take.

Sir Fret. No, quite the contrary! their abuse is, in
fact, the best panegyric—I like it of all things.
An author's reputation is only in danger from
their support.

Sneer. Why that's true—and that attack, now, on 420
you the other day——

Sir Fret. What? where?

Dang. Ay, you mean in a paper of Thursday: it
was completely ill-natured, to be sure.

Sir Fret. Oh, so much the better.—Ha! ha! ha!

I wouldn't have it otherwise.

Dang. Certainly it is only to be laughed at; for——

Sir Fret. You don't happen to recollect what the fellow said, do you?

Sneer. Pray, Dangle—Sir Fretful seems a little 430
anxious——

Sir Fret. O lud, no!—anxious!—not I,—not the least.—I—but one may as well hear, you know.

Dang. Sneer, do you recollect?—[*Aside to Sneer.*]
Make out something.

Sneer. [*Aside to Dangle.*] I will.—[*Aloud.*] Yes, yes, I remember perfectly.

Sir Fret. Well, and pray now—not that it signifies—what might the gentleman say?

Sneer. Why, he roundly asserts that you have not 440
the slightest invention or original genius whatever; though you are the greatest traducer of all other authors living.

Sir Fret. Ha! ha! ha!—very good!

Sneer. That as to comedy, you have not one idea of your own, he believes, even in your commonplace-book—where stray jokes and pilfered witticisms are kept with as much method as the ledger of the lost and stolen office.

Sir Fret. Ha! ha! ha!—very pleasant! 450

Sneer. Nay, that you are so unlucky as not to have the skill even to steal with taste:—but that you glean from the refuse of obscure volumes, where more judicious plagiarists have been before you; so that the body of your work is a composition of dregs and sediments—like a bad tavern's worst wine.

Sir Fret. Ha! ha!

Sneer. In your more serious efforts, he says, your bombast would be less intolerable, if the 460 thoughts were ever suited to the expression; but the homeliness of the sentiment stares through the fantastic encumbrance of its fine language, like a clown in one of the new uniforms!

Sir Fret. Ha! ha!

Sneer. That your occasional tropes and flowers suit the general coarseness of your style, as tambour sprigs would a ground of linsey-woolsey; while your imitations of Shakespeare 470 resemble the mimicry of Falstaff's page, and are about as near the standard of the original.

Sir Fret. Ha!

Sneer. In short, that even the finest passages you

steal are of no service to you; for the poverty of your own language prevents their assimilating; so that they lie on the surface like lumps of marl on a barren moor, encumbering what it is not in their power to fertilise!

Sir Fret. [*After great agitation.*] Now, another 480
person would be vexed at this.

Sneer. Oh! but I wouldn't have told you—only to divert you.

Sir Fret. I know it—I am diverted.—Ha! ha! ha!—not the least invention!—Ha! ha! ha!—very good!—very good!

Sneer. Yes—no genius! ha! ha! ha!

Dang. A severe rogue! ha! ha! ha! But you are quite right, Sir Fretful, never to read such nonsense.

Sir Fret. To be sure—for if there is any thing to one's praise, it is a foolish vanity to be gratified at it; and, if it is abuse,—why one is always sure to hear of it from one damned good-natured friend or another! 490

Enter Servant.

Ser. Sir, there is an Italian gentleman, with a French interpreter, and three young ladies, and

a dozen musicians, who say they are sent by Lady Rondeau and Mrs Fugue.

Dang. Gadso! they come by appointment!—Dear 500
Mrs Dangle, do let them know I'll see them directly.

Mrs Dang. You know, Mr Dangle, I shan't understand a word they say.

Dang. But you hear there's an interpreter.

Mrs Dang. Well, I'll try to endure their complaisance till you come. [Exit.

Ser. And Mr Puff, sir, has sent word that the last rehearsal is to be this morning, and that he'll call on you presently. 510

Dang. That's true—I shall certainly be at home.—
[Exit Servant.] Now, Sir Fretful, if you have a mind to have justice done you in the way of answer, egad, Mr Puff's your man.

Sir Fret. Psha! Sir, why should I wish to have it answered, when I tell you I am pleased at it?

Dang. True, I had forgot that. But I hope you are not fretted at what Mr Sneer——

Sir Fret. Zounds! no, Mr Dangle; don't I tell 520
you these things never fret me in the least?

Dang. Nay, I only thought——

Sir Fret. And let me tell you, Mr Dangle, 'tis damned affronting in you to suppose that I am hurt when I tell you I am not.

Sneer. But why so warm, Sir Fretful?

Sir Fret. Gad's life! Mr Sneer, you are as absurd as Dangle: how often must I repeat it to you, that nothing can vex me but your supposing it possible for me to mind the damned nonsense 530 you have been repeating to me!—and, let me tell you, if you continue to believe this, you must mean to insult me, gentlemen—and, then, your disrespect will affect me no more than the newspaper criticisms—and I shall treat it with exactly the same calm indifference and philosophic contempt—and so your servant. [*Exit.*]

Sneer. Ha! ha! ha! poor Sir Fretful! Now will he go and vent his philosophy in anonymous abuse of all modern critics and authors.—But, 540 Dangle, you must get your friend Puff to take me to the rehearsal of his tragedy.

Dang. I'll answer for 't, he'll thank you for desiring it. But come and help me to judge of this musical family: they are recommended by people of consequence, I assure you.

Sneer. I am at your disposal the whole morning:—

but I thought you had been a decided critic in music as well as in literature.

Dang. So I am—but I have a bad ear. I'faith, 550
Sneer, though, I am afraid we were a little too severe on Sir Fretful—though he is my friend.

Sneer. Why, 'tis certain, that unnecessarily to mortify the vanity of any writer is a cruelty which mere dulness never can deserve; but where a base and personal malignity usurps the place of literary emulation, the aggressor deserves neither quarter nor pity.

Dang. That's true, egad!—though he's my friend! 560

Scene II.

A Drawing-room in Dangle's House.

Mrs Dangle, Signor Pasticcio Ritornello, Signore Pasticcio Ritornello, Interpreter, and Musicians, discovered.

Interp. Je dis, madame, j'ai l'honneur to introduce et de vous demander votre protection pour le signor Pasticcio Ritornello et pour sa charmante famille.

Signor Past. Ah! vosignoria, noi vi preghiamo di favoritevi colla vostra protezione.

1st Signora Past. Vosignoria fatevi questi grazie.

2nd Signora Past. Si, signora.

Interp. Madame—me interpret.—C'est à dire—in
English—qu'ils vous prient de leur faire 10
l'honneur——

Mrs Dang. I say again, gentleman, I don't understand a word you say.

Signor Past. Questo signore spiegherò——

Interp. Oui—me interpret.—Nous avons les lettres
de recommandation pour monsieur Dangle
de——

Mrs Dang. Upon my word, sir, I don't understand you.

Signor Past. La contessa Rondeau è nostra padrona. 20

3rd Signora Past. Si, padre, et miladi Fugue.

Interp. O!—me interpret.—Madame, ils disent—in
English—qu'ils ont l'honneur d'être protégés
de ces dames.—You understand?

Mrs Dang. No, sir,—no understand!

Enter Dangle and Sneer.

Interp. Ah, voici monsieur Dangle!

All Italians. Ah! signor Dangle!

Mrs Dang. Mr Dangle, here are two very civil gentlemen trying to make themselves under-

stood, and I don't know which is the inter- 30
preter.

Dang. Eh, bien!

[*The Interpreter and Signor Pasticcio here
speak at the same time.*]

Interp. Monsieur Dangle, le grand bruit de vos talents pour la critique, et de votre intérêt avec messieurs les directeurs à tous les théâtres——

Signor Past. Vosignoria siete si famoso par la vostra conoscenza, e vostra interessa colla le direttore da——

Dang. Egad, I think the interpreter is the hardest to be understood of the two! 40

Sneer. Why, I thought, Dangle, you had been an admirable linguist!

Dang. So I am, if they would not talk so damned fast.

Sneer. Well, I'll explain that—the less time we lose in hearing them the better—for that, I suppose, is what they are brought here for.

[*Speaks to Signor Pasticcio—they sing trios,
&c., Dangle beating out of time.*]

Enter Servant and whispers Dangle.

Dang. Show him up.—[*Exit Servant.*] Bravo!

admirable bravissimo! admirablissimo!—Ah!
Sneer! where will you find voices such as 50
these in England?

Sneer. Not easily.

Dang. But Puff is coming.—Signor and little signoras obligatissimo!—Sposa signora Dangelena—Mrs Dangle, shall I beg you to offer them some refreshments, and take their address in the next room.

[*Exit Mrs Dangle with Signor Pasticcio, Signore Pasticcio, Musicians, and Interpreter, ceremoniously.*]

Re-enter Servant.

Ser. Mr Puff, sir.

[*Exit.*]

Enter Puff.

Dang. My dear Puff!

Puff. My dear Dangle, how is it with you? 60

Dang. Mr Sneer, give me leave to introduce Mr Puff to you.

Puff. Mr Sneer is this?—Sir, he is a gentleman whom I have long panted for the honour of knowing—a gentleman whose critical talents and transcendent judgment——

Sneer. Dear Sir——

Dang. Nay, don't be modest, Sneer; my friend

Puff only talks to you in the style of his profession.

70

Sneer. His profession!

Puff. Yes, sir; I make no secret of the trade I follow: among friends and brother authors, Dangle knows I love to be frank on the subject, and to advertise myself *vivâ voce*.—I am, sir, a practitioner in panegyric, or, to speak more plainly, a professor of the art of puffing, at your service—or anybody else's.

Sneer. Sir, you are very obliging!—I believe, Mr Puff, I have often admired your talents in the daily prints. 80

Puff. Yes, sir, I flatter myself I do as much business in that way as any six of the fraternity in town.—Devilish hard work all the summer, friend Dangle,—never worked harder! But, hark'ee,—the winter managers were a little sore, I believe.

Dang. No; I believe they took it all in good part.

Puff. Ay! then that must have been affectation in them; for, egad, there were some of the attacks which there was no laughing at! 90

Sneer. Ay, the humorous ones.—But I should think,

Mr Puff, that authors would in general be able to do this sort of work for themselves.

Puff. Why, yes—but in a clumsy way. Besides, we look on that as an encroachment, and so take the opposite side. I dare say, now, you conceive half the very civil paragraphs and advertisements you see to be written by the 100 parties concerned, or their friends? No such thing: nine out of ten manufactured by me in the way of business.

Sneer. Indeed!

Puff. Even the auctioneers now—the auctioneers, I say—though the rogues have lately got some credit for their language—not an article of the merit theirs: take them out of their pulpits, and they are as dull as catalogues!—No, sir; 'twas I first enriched their style—'twas I first taught 110 them to crowd their advertisements with panegyrical superlatives, each epithet rising above the other, like the bidders in their own auction-rooms! From me they learned to inlay their phraseology with variegated chips of exotic metaphor: by me too their inventive faculties were called forth:—yes, sir, by me they were instructed to clothe ideal walls with gratuitous

fruits—to insinuate obsequious rivulets into
 visionary groves—to teach courteous shrubs 120
 to nod their approbation of the grateful soil ;
 or on emergencies to raise upstart oaks, where
 there never had been an acorn ; to create a
 delightful vicinage without the assistance of a
 neighbour ; or fix the temple of Hygeia in
 the fens of Lincolnshire !

Dang. I am sure you have done them infinite service ;
 for now, when a gentleman is ruined, he parts
 with his house with some credit.

Sneer. Service ! if they had any gratitude, they 130
 would erect a statue to him ; they would
 figure him as a presiding Mercury, the god of
 traffic and fiction, with a hammer in his hand
 instead of a caduceus.—But pray, Mr Puff,
 what first put you on exercising your talents in
 this way ?

Puff. Egad, sir, sheer necessity !—the proper parent
 of an art so nearly allied to invention. You
 must know, Mr Sneer, that from the first time
 I tried my hand at an advertisement, my success 140
 was such, that for some time after I led a most
 extraordinary life indeed !

Sneer. How, pray ?

Puff. Sir, I supported myself two years entirely by my misfortunes.

Sneer. By your misfortunes!

Puff. Yes, sir, assisted by long sickness, and other occasional disorders; and a very comfortable living I had of it.

Sneer. From sickness and misfortunes! You practised 150
as a doctor and an attorney at once?

Puff. No, egad; both maladies and miseries were my own.

Sneer. Hey! what the plague!

Dang. 'Tis true, i' faith.

Puff. Hark'ee!—By advertisements—*To the charitable and humane!* and *To those whom Providence hath blessed with affluence!*

Sneer. Oh, I understand you.

Puff. And, in truth, I deserved what I got; for I 160
suppose never man went through such a series of calamities in the same space of time. Sir, I was five times made a bankrupt, and reduced from a state of affluence, by a train of unavoidable misfortunes: then, sir, though a very industrious tradesman, I was twice burned out, and lost my little all both times: I lived upon those fires a month. I soon after was confined

by a most excruciating disorder, and lost the use of my limbs: that told very well; for I 170 had the case strongly attested, and went about to collect the subscriptions myself.

Dang. Egad, I believe that was when you first called on me.

Puff. In November last?—O no; I was at that time a close prisoner in the Marshalsea, for a debt benevolently contracted to serve a friend. I was afterwards twice tapped for a dropsy, which declined into a very profitable consumption. I was then reduced to—O no—then, I became a 180 widow with six helpless children, after having had eleven husbands pressed, and being left every time eight months gone with child, and without money to get me into an hospital!

Sneer. And you bore all with patience, I make no doubt?

Puff. Why, yes; though I made some occasional attempts at *felo de se*; but as I did not find those rash actions answer, I left off killing myself very soon. Well, sir, at last, what with 190 bankruptcies, fires, gouts, dropsies, imprisonments, and other valuable calamities, having got together a pretty handsome sum, I deter-

mined to quit a business which had always gone rather against my conscience, and in a more liberal way still to indulge my talents for fiction and embellishments, through my favourite channels of diurnal communication—and so, sir, you have my history.

Sneer. Most obligingly communicative indeed! and 200
your confession, if published, might certainly serve the cause of true charity, by rescuing the most useful channels of appeal to benevolence from the cant of imposition. But surely, Mr Puff, there is no great mystery in your present profession?

Puff. Mystery, sir! I will take upon me to say the matter was never scientifically treated nor reduced to rule before.

Sneer. Reduced to rule! 210

Puff. O lud, sir, you are very ignorant, I am afraid! —Yes, sir, puffing is of various sorts; the principal are, the puff direct, the puff preliminary, the puff collateral, and the puff collusive, and the puff oblique, or puff by implication. These all assume, as circumstances require, the various forms of Letter to the Editor, Occasional Anecdote, Impartial Critique, Observation from

Correspondent, or Advertisement from the Party. 220

Sneer. The puff direct, I can conceive—

Puff. O yes, that's simple enough! For instance,—
 a new comedy or farce is to be produced at one
 of the theatres (though by-the-by they don't
 bring out half what they ought to do)—the
 author, suppose Mr Smatter, or Mr Dapper,
 or any particular friend of mine—very well;
 the day before it is to be performed, I write an
 account of the manner in which it was received;
 I have the plot from the author, and only add 230
 —“characters strongly drawn—highly coloured
 —hand of a master—fund of genuine humour—
 mine of invention—neat dialogue—Attic salt.”
 Then for the performance—“Mr Dodd was
 astonishingly great in the character of Sir
 Harry. That universal and judicious actor,
 Mr Palmer, perhaps never appeared to more
 advantage than in the colonel;—but it is not
 in the power of language to do justice to Mr
 King: indeed he more than merited those re- 240
 peated bursts of applause which he drew from
 a most brilliant and judicious audience. As to
 the scenery—the miraculous powers of Mr De

Loutherbourg's pencil are universally acknowledged. In short, we are at a loss which to admire most, the unrivalled genius of the author, the great attention and liberality of the managers, the wonderful abilities of the painter, or the incredible exertions of all the performers."

Sneer. That's pretty well indeed, sir.

250

Puff. Oh, cool!—quite cool!—to what I sometimes do.

Sneer. And do you think there are any who are influenced by this?

Puff. O lud, yes, sir! the number of those who undergo the fatigue of judging for themselves is very small indeed.

Sneer. Well, sir, the puff preliminary?

Puff. O, that, sir, does well in the form of a caution.

In a matter of gallantry now — Sir Flimsy Gossamer wishes to be well with Lady Fanny Fete—he applies to me—I open trenches for him with a paragraph in the "Morning Post."—"It is recommended to the beautiful and accomplished Lady F four stars F dash E to be on her guard against that dangerous character, Sir F dash G; who, however pleasing and insinuating his manners may be, is certainly not

260

remarkable for the *constancy of his attachments!*”
 —in italics. Here, you see, Sir Flimsy 270
 Gossamer is introduced to the particular notice
 of Lady Fanny, who perhaps never thought
 of him before — she finds herself publicly
 cautioned to avoid him, which naturally makes
 her desirous of seeing him ; the observation of
 their acquaintance causes a pretty kind of
 mutual embarrassment ; this produces a sort of
 sympathy of interest which if Sir Flimsy is
 unable to improve effectually, he at least gains
 the credit of having their names mentioned 280
 together by a particular set, and in a particular
 way—which nine times out of ten is the full
 accomplishment of modern gallantry.

Dang. Egad, Sneer, you will be quite an adept in
 the business !

Puff. Now, sir, the puff collateral is much used as
 an appendage to advertisements, and may take
 the form of anecdote.—“Yesterday, as the
 celebrated George Bonmot was sauntering
 down St James’s Street, he met the lively 290
 Lady Mary Myrtle coming out of the park :—
 ‘ Good God, Lady Mary, I’m surprised to
 meet you in a white jacket,—for I expected

never to have seen you, but in a full-trimmed uniform and a light horseman's cap! '—
 'Heavens, George, where could you have learned that?'—'Why,' replied the wit, 'I just saw a print of you, in a new publication called the Camp Magazine; which, by the by, is a devilish clever thing, and is sold at No. 3, 300
 on the right hand of the way, two doors from the printing-office, the corner of Ivy Lane, Paternoster Row, price only one shilling.'"

Sneer. Very ingenious indeed!

Puff. But the puff collusive is the newest of any; for it acts in the disguise of determined hostility. It is much used by bold booksellers and enterprising poets.—“An indignant correspondent observes, that the new poem called *Beelzebub's Cotillon*, or *Proserpine's Fête Champêtre*, is one 310
 of the most unjustifiable performances he ever read. The severity with which certain characters are handled is quite shocking: and as there are many descriptions in it too warmly coloured for female delicacy, the shameful avidity with which this piece is bought by all people of fashion is a reproach on the taste of the times, and a disgrace to the delicacy of the

age." Here you see the two strongest inducements are held forth; first, that nobody ought 320
to read it; and secondly, that everybody buys
it: on the strength of which the publisher
boldly prints the tenth edition, before he had
sold ten of the first; and then establishes
it by threatening himself with the pillory, or
absolutely indicting himself for *scan. mag.*

Dang. Ha! ha! ha;—'gad, I know it is so.

Puff. As to the puff oblique, or puff by implication,
it is too various and extensive to be illustrated
by an instance: it attracts in titles and presumes 330
in patents; it lurks in the limitation of a sub-
scription, and invites in the assurance of crowd
and incommodation at public places; it delights
to draw forth concealed merit, with a most dis-
interested assiduity; and sometimes wears a
countenance of smiling censure and tender
reproach. It has a wonderful memory for
parliamentary debates, and will often give the
whole speech of a favoured member with the
most flattering accuracy. But, above all, it is 340
a great dealer in reports and suppositions. It
has the earliest intelligence of intended prefer-
ments that will reflect honour on the patrons;

and embryo promotions of modest gentlemen, who know nothing of the matter themselves. It can hint a ribbon for implied services in the air of a common report ; and with the carelessness of a casual paragraph, suggest officers into commands, to which they have no pretension but their wishes. This, sir, is the last principal class of the art of puffing—an art which I hope you will now agree with me is of the highest dignity, yielding a tablature of benevolence and public spirit ; befriending equally trade, gallantry, criticism, and politics : the applause of genius—the register of charity—the triumph of heroism—the self-defence of contractors—the fame of orators—and the gazette of ministers. 350

Sneer. Sir, I am completely a convert both to the importance and ingenuity of your profession ; and now, sir, there is but one thing which can possibly increase my respect for you, and that is, your permitting me to be present this morning at the rehearsal of your new trage—— 360

Puff. Hush, for heaven's sake !—*My* tragedy !—Egad, Dangle, I take this very ill : you know

how apprehensive I am of being known to be the author.

37^c

Dang. I' faith I would not have told—but it's in the papers, and your name at length in the "Morning Chronicle."

Puff. Ah! those damned editors never can keep a secret!—Well, Mr Sneer, no doubt you will do me great honour—I shall be infinitely happy—highly flattered——

Dang. I believe it must be near the time—shall we go together?

Puff. No; it will not be yet this hour, for they are always late at that theatre: besides, I must meet you there, for I have some little matters here to send to the papers, and a few paragraphs to scribble before I go.—[*Looking at memorandums.*] Here is *A conscientious Baker, on the subject of the Army Bread*; and *A Detester of visible Brickwork, in favour of the new-invented Stucco*; both in the style of Junius, and promised for to-morrow. The Thames navigation too is at a stand. Misomud or Anti-shoal must go to work again directly. —Here too are some political memorandums— I see; ay—*To take Paul Jones, and get the*

38^c39^o

*Indiamen out of the Shannon—reinforce Byron—compel the Dutch to—so!—*I must do that in the evening papers, or reserve it for the “Morning Herald;” for I know that I have undertaken to-morrow, besides, to establish the unanimity of the fleet in the “Public Advertiser,” and to shoot Charles Fox in the “Morning 400 Post.”—So, egad, I ha’n’t a moment to lose!

Dang. Well, we’ll meet in the Green Room.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

Act Second.

Scene I.

The Theatre, before the Curtain.

Enter Dangle, Puff, and Sneer.

Puff. No, no, sir; what Shakespeare says of actors may be better applied to the purpose of plays; they ought to be *the abstract and brief chronicles of the time*. Therefore when history, and particularly the history of our own country, furnishes any thing like a case in point, to the time in which an author writes, if he knows his own interest, he will take advantage of it;

so, sir, I call my tragedy *The Spanish Armada*,
and have laid the scene before Tilbury Fort. 10

Sneer. A most happy thought, certainly!

Dang. Egad it was—I told you so. But pray now,
I don't understand how you have contrived to
introduce any love into it.

Puff. Love! oh, nothing so easy! for it is a received
point among poets, that where history gives you
a good heroic outline for a play, you may fill
up with a little love at your own discretion: in
doing which, nine times out of ten, you only
make up a deficiency in the private history of 20
the times. Now I rather think I have done
this with some success.

Sneer. No scandal about Queen Elizabeth, I hope?

Puff. O lud! no, no;—I only suppose the governor
of Tilbury Fort's daughter to be in love with
the son of the Spanish admiral.

Sneer. Oh, is that all!

Dang. Excellent, i' faith! I see at once. But won't
this appear rather improbable?

Puff. To be sure it will—but what the plague! a 30
play is not to show occurrences that happen
every day, but things just so strange, that
though they never did, they might happen.

Sneer. Certainly nothing is unnatural, that is not physically impossible.

Puff. Very true—and for that matter Don Ferolo Whiskerandos, for that's the lover's name, might have been over here in the train of the Spanish Ambassador; or Tilburina, for that is the lady's name, might have been in love with him, from having heard his character, or seen his picture; or from knowing that he was the last man in the world she ought to be in love with—or for any other good female reason.—
However, sir, the fact is, that though she is but a knight's daughter, egad! she is in love like any princess! 40

Dang. Poor young lady! I feel for her already! for I can conceive how great the conflict must be between her passion and her duty; her love for her country, and her love for Don Ferolo Whiskerandos! 50

Puff. Oh, amazing!—her poor susceptible heart is swayed to and fro by contending passions like——

Enter Under Prompter.

Und. Promp. Sir, the scene is set, and every thing is ready to begin, if you please.

Puff. Egad, then we 'll lose no time.

Und. Promp. Though, I believe, sir, you will find it very short, for all the performers have profited by the kind permission you granted them. 60

Puff. Hey! what?

Und. Promp. You know, sir, you gave them leave to cut out or omit whatever they found heavy or unnecessary to the plot, and I must own they have taken very liberal advantage of your indulgence.

Puff. Well, well.—They are in general very good judges, and I know I am luxuriant.—Now, Mr Hopkins, as soon as you please. 70

Und. Promp. [*To the Orchestra.*] Gentlemen, will you play a few bars of something, just to——

Puff. Ay, that's right; for as we have the scenes and dresses, egad, we 'll go to 't, as if it was the first night's performance;—but you need not mind stopping between the acts.—[*Exit Under Prompter.—Orchestra play—then the bell rings.*] So! stand clear, gentlemen. Now you know there will be a cry of Down! down! —Hats off!—Silence!—Then up curtain, and 80 let us see what our painters have done for us.

[*Curtain rises.*]

Scene II.

Tilbury Fort.

“Two Sentinels discovered asleep.”

Dang. Tilbury Fort!—very fine indeed!

Puff. Now, what do you think I open with?

Sneer. Faith, I can't guess——

Puff. A clock.—Hark!—[*Clock strikes.*] I open with a clock striking, to beget an awful attention in the audience: it also marks the time, which is four o'clock in the morning, and saves a description of the rising sun, and a great deal about gilding the eastern hemisphere.

Dang. But pray, are the sentinels to be asleep?

10

Puff. Fast as watchmen.

Sneer. Isn't that odd though at such an alarming crisis?

Puff. To be sure it is,—but smaller things must give way to a striking scene at the opening; that's a rule. And the case is, that two great men are coming to this very spot to begin the piece: now, it is not to be supposed they would open their lips, if these fellows were watching them;

so, egad, I must either have sent them off their 20
posts, or set them asleep.

Sneer. Oh, that accounts for it.—But tell us, who
are these coming?

Puff. These are they—Sir Walter Raleigh, and
Sir Christopher Hatton You'll know Sir
Christopher by his turning out his toes—
famous, you know, for his dancing. I like to
preserve all the little traits of character.—
Now attend.

“*Enter Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Christopher Hatton.*

Sir Christ. True, gallant Raleigh!”— 30

Dang. What, they had been talking before?

Puff. O yes; all the way as they came along.—
[*To the Actors.*] I beg pardon, gentlemen,
but these are particular friends of mine,
whose remarks may be of great service to
us.—[*To Sneer and Dangle.*] Don't mind in-
terrupting them whenever anything strikes you.

“*Sir Christ.* True, gallant Raleigh!

But oh, thou champion of thy country's fame,
There is a question which I yet must ask: 40
A question which I never asked before—

What mean these mighty armaments ?

This general muster ? and this throng of chiefs ?”

Sneer. Pray, Mr Puff, how came Sir Christopher Hatton never to ask that question before ?

Puff. What, before the play began ?—how the plague could he ?

Dang. That’s true, i’ faith !

Puff. But you will hear what he thinks of the matter.

50

“*Sir Christ.* Alas ! my noble friend, when I behold
 Yon tented plains in martial symmetry
 Arrayed ; when I count o’er yon glittering lines
 Of crested warriors, where the proud steeds’ neigh
 And valour-breathing trumpet’s shrill appeal,
 Responsive vibrate on my listening ear ;
 When virgin majesty herself I view,
 Like her protecting Pallas, veiled in steel,
 With graceful confidence exhort to arms !
 When, briefly, all I hear or see bears stamp
 Of martial vigilance and stern defence,
 I cannot but surmise—forgive, my friend,
 If the conjecture’s rash—I cannot but
 Surmise the state some danger apprehends !”

60

Sneer. A very cautious conjecture that.

Puff. Yes, that's his character; not to give an opinion but on secure grounds.—Now then.

“*Sir Walt.* O most accomplished Christopher!”——

Puff. He calls him by his christian name, to show that they are on the most familiar terms. 70

“*Sir Walt.* O most accomplished Christopher! I find Thy staunch sagacity still tracks the future,
In the fresh print of the o'ertaken past.”

Puff. Figurative!

“*Sir Walt.* Thy fears are just.

Sir Christ. But where? whence? when? and what The danger is,—methinks I fain would learn.

Sir Walt. You know, my friend, scarce two revolving
suns,

And three revolving moons, have closed their course,
Since haughty Philip, in despite of peace, 80
With hostile hand hath struck at England's trade.

Sir Christ. I know it well.

Sir Walt. Philip, you know, is proud Iberia's king!

Sir Christ. He is.

Sir Walt. His subjects in base bigotry
And Catholic oppression held;—while we,
You know, the Protestant persuasion hold.

Sir Christ. We do.

Sir Walt. You know, beside, his boasted armament,
The famed Armada, by the Pope baptized, 90
With purpose to invade these realms——

Sir Christ. Is sailed,
Our last advices so report.

Sir Walt. While the Iberian admiral's chief hope,
His darling son——

Sir Christ. Ferolo Whiskerandos hight——

Sir Walt. The same—by chance a prisoner hath been
ta'en,

And in this fort of Tilbury——

Sir Christ. Is now

Confined—'tis true, and oft from yon tall turret's top
I've marked the youthful Spaniard's haughty mien—
Unconquered, though in chains.

Sir Walt. You also know"——

Dang. Mr Puff, as he knows all this, why does Sir 100
Walter go on telling him?

Puff. But the audience are not supposed to know
any thing of the matter, are they?

Sneer. True; but I think you manage ill: for there
certainly appears no reason why Sir Walter
should be so communicative.

Puff. 'Fore Gad, now, that is one of the most ungrateful observations I ever heard!—for the less inducement he has to tell all this, the more, I think, you ought to be obliged to him; for I am 110 sure you'd know nothing of the matter without it.

Dang. That's very true, upon my word.

Puff. But you will find he was not going on.

“*Sir Christ.* Enough, enough—'tis plain—and I no more

Am in amazement lost!”——

Puff. Here, now you see, Sir Christopher did not in fact ask any one question for his own information.

Sneer. No, indeed: his has been a most disinterested curiosity! 120

Dang. Really, I find, we are very much obliged to them both.

Puff. To be sure you are. Now then for the commander-in-chief, the Earl of Leicester, who, you know, was no favourite but of the queen's.—We left off—in amazement lost!

“*Sir Christ.* Am in amazement lost.

But, see where noble Leicester comes! supreme
In honours and command.

Sir Walt. And yet, methinks,
At such a time, so perilous, so feared, 130
That staff might well become an abler grasp.

Sir Christ. And so, by Heaven! think I; but soft,
he's here!"

Puff. Ay, they envy him!

Sneer. But who are these with him?

Puff. Oh! very valiant knights: one is the governor
of the fort, the other the master of the horse.

And now, I think, you shall hear some better
language: I was obliged to be plain and intel-
ligible in the first scene, because there was so
much matter of fact in it; but now, i' faith, 140
you have trope, figure, and metaphor, as plenty
as noun-substantives.

*“Enter Earl of Leicester, Governor, Master of the
Horse, Knights, &c.*

Leic. How's this, my friends! is't thus your new-
fledged zeal-

And plumèd valour moulds in roosted sloth?
Why dimly glimmers that heroic flame,
Whose reddening blaze, by patriot spirit fed,
Should be the beacon of a kindling realm?

Can the quick current of a patriot heart

Thus stagnate in a cold and weedy converse,
 Or freeze in tideless inactivity? 150
 No! rather let the fountain of your valour
 Spring through each stream of enterprise,
 Each petty channel of conducive daring,
 Till the full torrent of your foaming wrath
 O'erwhelm the flats of sunk hostility!"

Puff. There it is—followed up!

"*Sir Walt.* No more!—the freshening breath of thy
 rebuke

Hath filled the swelling canvas of our souls!
 And thus, though fate should cut the cable of

[*All take hands.*

Our topmost hopes, in friendship's closing line 160
 We'll grapple with despair, and if we fall,
 We'll fall in glory's wake!

Leic. There spoke old England's genius!

Then, are we all resolved?

All. We are—all resolved.

Leic. To conquer—or be free?

All. To conquer, or be free.

Leic. All?

All. All."

Dang. Nem. con. egad!

Puff. O yes!—where they do agree on the stage,
their unanimity is wonderful!

“*Leic.* Then let’s embrace—and now—— [*Kneels.*”

Sneer. What the plague, is he going to pray?

Puff. Yes; hush!—in great emergencies, there is
nothing like a prayer.

“*Leic.* O mighty Mars!”

Dang. But why should he pray to Mars?

Puff. Hush!

“*Leic.* If in thy homage bred, 180
Each point of discipline I’ve still observed;
Nor but by due promotion, and the right
Of service, to the rank of major-general
Have risen; assist thy votary now!

Gov. Yet do not rise—hear me! [*Kneels.*

Mast. And me! [*Kneels.*

Knight. And me! [*Kneels.*

Sir Walt. And me! [*Kneels.*

Sir Christ. And me! [*Kneels.*”

Puff. Now pray altogether. 190

“*All.* Behold thy votaries submissive beg,
That thou wilt deign to grant them all they ask;
Assist them to accomplish all their ends.”

And sanctify whatever means they use
To gain them! ”

Sneer. A very orthodox quintetto!

Puff. Vastly well, gentlemen!—Is that well managed or not? Have you such a prayer as that on the stage?

Sneer. Not exactly.

200

Leic. [*To Puff.*] But, sir, you haven't settled how we are to get off here.

Puff. You could not go off kneeling, could you?

Sir Walt. [*To Puff.*] O no, sir; impossible!

Puff. It would have a good effect, i' faith, if you could exeunt praying!—Yes, and would vary the established mode of springing off with a glance at the pit.

Sneer. Oh, never mind, so as you get them off!—

I'll answer for it, the audience won't care how. 210

Puff. Well, then, repeat the last line standing, and go off the old way.

“*All.* And sanctify whatever means we use
To gain them.

[*Exeunt.*”]

Dang. Bravo! a fine exit.

Sneer. Well, really, Mr Puff——

Puff. Stay a moment!

“The Sentinels get up.

1st Sent. All this shall to Lord Burleigh's ear.

2nd Sent. 'Tis meet it should. [Exeunt.]”

Dang. Hey!—why, I thought those fellows had 220
been asleep?

Puff. Only a pretence; there's the art of it: they
were spies of Lord Burleigh's.

Sneer. But isn't it odd they never were taken notice
of, not even by the commander-in-chief?

Puff. O lud, sir! if people, who want to listen or
overhear, were not always connived at in a
tragedy, there would be no carrying on any
plot in the world.

Dang. That's certain! 230

Puff. But take care, my dear Dangle! the morning-
gun is going to fire. [Cannon fires.]

Dang. Well, that will have a fine effect!

Puff. I think so, and helps to realise the scene.—
[Cannon twice.] What the plague! three
morning guns! there never is but one!—Ay,
this is always the way at the theatre: give these
fellows a good thing, and they never know when
to have done with it.—You have no more
cannon to fire? 240

Und. Promp. [*Within.*] No, sir.

Puff. Now, then, for soft music.

Sneer. Pray what 's that for?

Puff. It shows that Tilburina is coming;—nothing introduces you a heroine like soft music. Here she comes!

Dang. And her confidant, I suppose?

Puff. To be sure! Here they are—inconsolable to the minuet in Ariadne! [*Soft music.*]

“*Enter Tilburina and Confidant.*”

Tilb. Now has the whispering breath of gentle morn
 Bid Nature's voice and Nature's beauty rise; 251
 While orient Phœbus, with unborrowed hues,
 Clothes the waked loveliness which all night slept
 In heavenly drapery! Darkness is fled.
 Now flowers unfold their beauties to the sun,
 And, blushing, kiss the beam he sends to wake
 them—

The striped carnation, and the guarded rose,
 The vulgar wallflower, and smart gillyflower,
 The polyanthus mean—the dapper daisy,
 Sweet-william, and sweet marjoram—and all 260
 The tribe of single and of double pinks!
 Now, too, the feathered warblers tune their notes

Around, and charm the listening grove. The lark !
The linnet ! chaffinch ! bullfinch ! goldfinch ! green-
finch !

But O, to me no joy can they afford !
Nor rose, nor wallflower, nor smart gillyflower,
Nor polyanthus mean, nor dapper daisy,
Nor William sweet, nor marjoram—nor lark,
Linnet, nor all the finches of the grove ! ”

Puff. Your white handkerchief, madam !—— 270

Tilb. I thought, sir, I wasn't to use that till *heart-
rending woe.*

Puff. O yes, madam, at *the finches of the grove*, if
you please.

“*Tilb.* Nor lark,
Linnet, nor all the finches of the grove ! [*Weeps.*”

Puff. Vastly well, madam !

Dang. Vastly well, indeed !

“*Tilb.* For, O, too sure, heart-rending woe is now
The lot of wretched Tilburina ! ” 280

Dang. Oh !—’tis too much !

Sneer. Oh !—it is indeed !

“*Con.* Be comforted, sweet lady ; for who knows,
But Heaven has yet some milk-white day in store ?

Tilb. Alas ! my gentle Nora,
 Thy tender youth as yet hath never mourned
 Love's fatal dart. Else wouldst thou know, that
 when
 The soul is sunk in comfortless despair,
 It cannot taste of merriment."

Dang. That's certain !

29c

"*Con.* But see where your stern father comes :
 It is not meet that he should find you thus."

Puff. Hey, what the plague !—what a cut is here !
 Why, what is become of the description of her
 first meeting with Don Whiskerandos — his
 gallant behaviour in the sea-fight—and the
 simile of the canary-bird ?

Tilb. Indeed, sir, you'll find they will not be missed.

Puff. Very well, very well !

Tilb. [*To Confidant.*] The cue, ma'am, if you please. 300

"*Con.* It is not meet that he should find you thus.

Tilb. Thou counsel'st right ; but 'tis no easy task
 For barefaced grief to wear a mask of joy.

Enter Governor.

Gov. How's this ! in tears ?—O Tilburina, shame !
 Is this a time for maudling tenderness,

And Cupid's baby woes?—Hast thou not heard
That haughty Spain's pope-consecrated fleet
Advances to our shores, while England's fate,
Like a clipped guinea, trembles in the scale?

Tilb. Then is the crisis of my fate at hand! 310
I see the fleets approach—I see——”

Puff. Now, pray, gentlemen, mind. This is one of
the most useful figures we tragedy writers have,
by which a hero or heroine, in consideration of
their being often obliged to overlook things that
are on the stage, is allowed to hear and see a
number of things that are not.

Sneer. Yes; a kind of poetical second-sight!

Puff. Yes.—Now then, madam.

“*Tilb.* I see their decks 320
Are cleared!—I see the signal made!
The line is formed!—a cable's length asunder!—
I see the frigates stationed in the rear;
And now, I hear the thunder of the guns!
I hear the victor's shouts!—I also hear
The vanquished groan!—and now 'tis smoke—and
now

I see the loose sails shiver in the wind!
I see—I see—what soon you'll see——

Gov. Hold, daughter! peace! this love hath turned
thy brain:

The Spanish fleet thou canst not see—because 330
—It is not yet in sight!”

Dang. Egad, though, the governor seems to make
no allowance for this poetical figure you talk of.

Puff. No, a plain matter-of-fact man;—that’s his
character.

“*Tilb.* But will you then refuse his offer?

Gov. I must—I will—I can—I ought—I do.

Tilb. Think what a noble price.

Gov. No more—you urge in vain.

Tilb. His liberty is all he asks.” 340

Sneer. All *who* asks, Mr Puff? Who is——

Puff. Egad, sir, I can’t tell! Here has been
such cutting and slashing, I don’t know where
they have got to myself.

Tilb. Indeed, sir, you will find it will connect very
well.

“—And your reward secure.”

Puff. Oh, if they hadn’t been so devilish free with
their cutting here, you would have found that
Don Whiskerandos has been tampering for his 350

liberty, and has persuaded Tilburina to make this proposal to her father. And now, pray observe the conciseness with which the argument is conducted. Egad, the *pro* and *con* goes as smart as hits in a fencing-match. It is indeed a sort of small-sword logic, which we have borrowed from the French.

“*Tilb.* A retreat in Spain!

Gov. Outlawry here!

Tilb. Your daughter’s prayer?

360

Gov. Your father’s oath.

Tilb. My lover!

Gov. My country!

Tilb. Tilburina!

Gov. England!

Tilb. A title!

Gov. Honour!

Tilb. A pension!

Gov. Conscience!

Tilb. A thousand pounds!

370

Gov. Ha! thou hast touched me nearly!”

Puff. There you see—she threw in *Tilburina*, Quick, parry quarte with *England!*—Ha! thrust in tierce *a title!*—parried by *honour.*

Ha! *a pension* over the arm!—put by by *conscience*. Then flankonade with *a thousand pounds*—and a palpable hit, egad!

“*Tilb.* Canst thou—

Reject the suppliant, and the daughter too?

Gov. No more; I would not hear thee plead in vain:

The father softens—but the governor 381

Is fixed! [*Exit.*”

Dang. Ay, that antithesis of persons is a most established figure.

“*Tilb.* ’Tis well,—hence then, fond hopes,—fond passion, hence;

Duty, behold I am all over thine——

Whisk. [*Without.*] Where is my love—my——

Tilb. Ha!

Enter Don Ferolo Whiskerandos.

Whisk. My beauteous enemy!——”

Puff. O dear, ma’am, you must start a great deal 390
more than that! Consider, you had just determined in favour of duty—when, in a moment, the sound of his voice revives your passion—overthrows your resolution—destroys your obedience. If you don’t express all that in your start, you do nothing at all.

Tilb. Well, we'll try again!

Dang. Speaking from within has always a fine effect.

Sneer. Very. 400

“*Whisk.* My conquering Tilburina! How! is't thus
We meet? why are thy looks averse? what means
That falling tear—that frown of boding woe?

Ha! now indeed I am a prisoner!

Yes, now I feel the galling weight of these
Disgraceful chains—which, cruel Tilburina!

Thy doating captive gloried in before.—

But thou art false, and Whiskerandos is undone!

Tilb. O no! how little dost thou know thy Tilburina!

Whisk. Art thou then true?—Begone cares, doubts,
and fears, 410

I make you all a present to the winds;

And if the winds reject you—try the waves.”

Puff. The wind, you know, is the established receiver of all stolen sighs and cast-off griefs and apprehensions.

“*Tilb.* Yet must we part!—stern duty seals our doom:
Though here I call yon conscious clouds to witness,
Could I pursue the bias of my soul,
All friends, all right of parents, I'd disclaim,

And thou, my Whiskerandos, shouldst be father 420
 And mother, brother, cousin, uncle, aunt,
 And friend to me!

Whisk. O, matchless excellence! and must we part?
 Well, if we must—we must—and in that case
 The less is said the better.”

Puff. Heyday! here’s a cut!—What, are all the
 mutual protestations out?

Tilb. Now, pray, sir, don’t interrupt us just here:
 you ruin our feelings.

Puff. Your feelings!—but zounds, my feelings, 430
 ma’am!

Sneer. No; pray don’t interrupt them.

“*Whisk.* One last embrace.

Tilb. Now,—farewell, for ever.

Whisk. For ever!

Tilb. Ay, for ever! [*Going.*”

Puff. ’Sdeath and fury!—Gad’s life!—sir! madam!
 if you go out without the parting look, you
 might as well dance out. Here, here!

Con. But pray, sir, how am I to get off here? 44C

Puff. You! pshaw! what the devil signifies how
 you get off! edge away at the top, or where

you will—[*Pushes the Confidant off.*] Now,
ma'am, you see——

Tilb. We understand you, sir.

“ Ay, for ever.

Both. Oh! [*Turning back, and exeunt.—Scene closes.*”

Dang. Oh, charming!

Puff. Hey!—'tis pretty well, I believe: you see
I don't attempt to strike out any thing new 450
—but I take it I improve on the established
modes.

Sneer. You do, indeed! But pray is not Queen
Elizabeth to appear?

Puff. No, not once—but she is to be talked of for
ever; so that, egad, you'll think a hundred
times that she is on the point of coming in.

Sneer. Hang it, I think it's a pity to keep her in
the green room all the night.

Puff. O no, that always has a fine effect—it keeps 460
up expectation.

Dang. But are we not to have a battle?

Puff. Yes, yes, you will have a battle at last; but,
egad, it's not to be by land, but by sea—
and that is the only quite new thing in the
piece.

Dang. What, Drake at the Armada, hey?

Puff. Yes, i' faith—fire-ships and all; then we shall end with the procession. Hey, that will do, I think?

470

Sneer. No doubt on't.

Puff. Come, we must not lose time; so now for the under-plot.

Sneer. What the plague, have you another plot?

Puff. O Lord, yes; ever while you live have two plots to your tragedy. The grand point in managing them is only to let your under-plot have as little connection with your main-plot as possible.—I flatter myself nothing can be more distinct than mine; for as in my chief plot the characters are all great people, I have laid my under-plot in low life; and as the former is to end in deep distress, I make the other end as happy as a farce.—Now, Mr Hopkins, as soon as you please.

480

Enter Under Prompter.

Und. Promp. Sir, the carpenter says it is impossible you can go to the park scene yet.

Puff. The park scene! no! I mean the description scene here, in the wood.

Und. Promp. Sir, the performers have cut it out. 490

Puff. Cut it out!

Und. Promp. Yes, sir.

Puff. What! the whole account of Queen Elizabeth?

Und. Promp. Yes, sir.

Puff. And the description of her horse and side-saddle?

Und. Promp. Yes, sir.

Puff. So, so; this is very fine indeed!—Mr Hopkins, how the plague could you suffer this?

500

Mr Hop. [*Within.*] Sir, indeed the pruning-knife——

Puff. The pruning-knife — zounds! — the axe! Why, here has been such lopping and topping, I shan't have the bare trunk of my play left presently!—Very well, sir—the performers must do as they please; but, upon my soul, I'll print it every word.

Sneer. That I would, indeed.

Puff. Very well, sir; then we must go on.—Zounds! 510

I would not have parted with the description of the horse!—Well, sir, go on.—Sir, it was one of the finest and most laboured things.—Very well, sir; let them go on.—There you

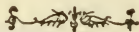
had him and his accoutrements, from the bit to the crupper.—Very well, sir; we must go to the park scene.

Und. Promp. Sir, there is the point: the carpenters say, that unless there is some business put in here before the drop, they shan't have time to clear away the fort, or sink Gravesend and the river. 520

Puff. So! this is a pretty dilemma, truly!—Gentlemen, you must excuse me—these fellows will never be ready, unless I go and look after them myself.

Sneer. O dear, sir, these little things will happen.

Puff. To cut out this scene!—but I'll print it—egad, I'll print it every word! [*Exeunt.*]



Act Third.

Scene I.

The Theatre, before the Curtain.

Enter Puff, Sneer, and Dangle.

Puff. Well, we are ready ; now then for the justices.

[*Curtain rises.*

“*Justices, Constables, &c., discovered.*”

Sneer. This, I suppose, is a sort of senate scene.

Puff. To be sure ; there has not been one yet.

Dang. It is the under-plot, isn't it ?

Puff. Yes.—What, gentlemen, do you mean to go at once to the discovery scene ?

Just. If you please, sir.

Puff. Oh, very well !—Hark'ee, I don't choose to say any thing more ; but, i' faith, they have mangled my play in a most shocking manner. 10

Dang. It's a great pity !

Puff. Now, then, Mr Justice, if you please.

“*Just.* Are all the volunteers without ?

Const.

They are.

Some ten in fetters, and some twenty drunk.

Just. Attends the youth, whose most opprobrious fame

And clear convicted crimes have stamped him soldier?

Const. He waits your pleasure ; eager to repay
The blest reprieve that sends him to the fields
Of glory, there to raise his branded hand
In honour's cause.

Just. 'Tis well—'tis justice arms him! 20
Oh ! may he now defend his country's laws
With half the spirit he has broke them all !
If 'tis your worship's pleasure, bid him enter.

Const. I fly, the herald of your will. [Exit.]

Puff. Quick, sir.

Sneer. But, Mr Puff, I think not only the Justice,
but the clown seems to talk in as high a style
as the first hero among them.

Puff. Heaven forbid they should not in a free
country !—Sir, I am not for making slavish 30
distinctions, and giving all the fine language to
the upper sort of people.

Dang. That's very noble in you, indeed.

“ Enter Justice's Lady.”

Puff. Now, pray mark this scene.

“ *Lady.* Forgive this interruption, good my love ;
But as I just now passed a prisoner youth,

Whom rude hands hither lead, strange bodings seized
 My fluttering heart, and to myself I said,
 An if our Tom had lived, he 'd surely been
 This stripling's height! 40

Just. Ha! sure some powerful sympathy directs
 Us both——

Re-enter Constable with Son.

What is thy name?

Son. My name is Tom Jenkins—*alias* have I none—
 Though orphaned, and without a friend!

Just. Thy parents!

Son. My father dwelt in Rochester—and was,
 As I have heard—a fishmonger—no more."

Puff. What, sir, do you leave out the account of
 your birth, parentage and education?

Son. They have settled it so, sir, here.

Puff. Oh! oh! 50

"*Lady.* How loudly nature whispers to my heart!
 Had he no other name?

Son. I've seen a bill
 Of his signed Tomkins, creditor.

Just. This does indeed confirm each circumstance
 The gipsy told!—Prepare!

Son.

I do.

Just. No orphan, nor without a friend art thou—

I am thy father ; here's thy mother ; there

Thy uncle—this thy first cousin, and those

Are all your near relations !

Lady. O ecstasy of bliss !

60

Son. O most unlooked for happiness !

Just. O wonderful event !

[*They faint alternately in each other's arms.*"]

Puff. There, you see relationship, like murder, will
out.

“ *Just.* Now let's revive — else were this joy too
much !

But come—and we'll unfold the rest within ;

And thou, my boy, must needs want rest and food.

Hence may each orphan hope, as chance directs,

To find a father—where he least expects ! ”

[*Exeunt.*”]

Puff. What do you think of that ?

70

Dang. One of the finest discovery-scenes I ever
saw !—Why, this under-plot would have made
a tragedy itself.

Sneer. Ay, or a comedy either.

Puff. And keeps quite clear you see of the other.

Enter Scenemen, taking away the seats.

Puff. The scene remains, does it?

Sceneman. Yes, sir.

Puff. You are to leave one chair, you know.—But it is always awkward in a tragedy, to have you fellows coming in in your playhouse liveries 80 to remove things.—I wish that could be managed better.—So now for my mysterious yeoman.

“Enter Beefeater.”

Beef. Perdition catch my soul, but I do love thee.”

Sneer. Haven't I heard that line before?

Puff. No, I fancy not.—Where, pray?

Dang. Yes, I think there is something like it in “Othello.”

Puff. Gad! now you put me in mind on 't, I believe there is—but that 's of no consequence; all that 90 can be said is, that two people happened to hit on the same thought—and Shakespeare made use of it first, that 's all.

Sneer. Very true.

Puff. Now, sir, your soliloquy—but speak more to

the pit, if you please—the soliloquy always to the pit, that's a rule.

“*Beef.* Though hopeless love finds comfort in despair,
It never can endure a rival's bliss!
But soft—I am observed. [*Exit.*” 100

Dang. That's a very short soliloquy.

Puff. Yes—but it would have been a great deal longer if he had not been observed.

Sneer. A most sentimental Beefeater that, Mr Puff!

Puff. Hark'ee—I would not have you be too sure that he is a Beefeater.

Sneer. What, a hero in disguise?

Puff. No matter—I only give you a hint. But now for my principal character. Here he comes— 110
Lord Burleigh in person! Pray, gentlemen, step this way—softly—I only hope the Lord High Treasurer is perfect—if he is but perfect!

“*Enter Lord Burleigh, goes slowly to a chair, and sits.*”

Sneer. Mr Puff!

Puff. Hush!—Vastly well, sir! vastly well! a most interesting gravity!

Dang. What, isn't he to speak at all?

Puff. Egad, I thought you'd ask me that!—Yes, it is a very likely thing—that a minister in his 120 situation, with the whole affairs of the nation on his head, should have time to talk!—But hush! or you'll put him out.

Sneer. Put him out! how the plague can that be, if he's not going to say any thing!

Puff. There's the reason! why, his part is to think; and how the plague do you imagine he can think if you keep talking?

Dang. That's very true, upon my word!

“ Lord Burleigh comes forward, shakes his head, and exit.”

Sneer. He is very perfect indeed! Now, pray what 130 did he mean by that?

Puff. You don't take it?

Sneer. No, I don't, upon my soul.

Puff. Why, by that shake of the head, he gave you to understand that even though they had more justice in their cause, and wisdom in their measures—yet, if there was not a greater spirit shown on the part of the people, the country would at last fall

a sacrifice to the hostile ambition of the 140
Spanish monarchy.

Sneer. The devil! did he mean all that by shaking
his head?

Puff. Every word of it—if he shook his head as I
taught him.

Dang. Ah! there certainly is a vast deal to be done
on the stage by dumb show and expression of
face; and a judicious author knows how much
he may trust to it.

Sneer. Oh, here are some of our old acquaintance. 150

“*Enter Sir Christopher Hatton and Sir Walter Raleigh.*

Sir Christ. My niece and your niece too!

By Heaven! there's witchcraft in't.—He could
not else

Have gained their hearts.—But see where they
approach:

Some horrid purpose lowering on their brows!

Sir Walt. Let us withdraw and mark them.

[*They withdraw.*”

Sneer. What is all this?

Puff. Ah! here has been more pruning!—but the
fact is, these two young ladies are also in love
with Don Whiskerandos.—Now, gentlemen,

this scene goes entirely for what we call situa- 160
tion and stage effect, by which the greatest
applause may be obtained, without the assistance
of language, sentiment, or character: pray mark!

“ *Enter the two Nieces.*

1st Niece. Ellena here!

She is his scorn as much as I—that is
Some comfort still!”

Puff. O dear, madam, you are not to say that to her
face!—aside, ma’am, aside.—The whole scene
is to be aside.

“ *1st Niece.* She is his scorn as much as I—that is 170
Some comfort still. [*Aside.*

2nd Niece. I know he prizes not Pollina’s love;
But Tilburina lords it o’er his heart. [*Aside.*

1st Niece. But see the proud destroyer of my peace.
Revenge is all the good I’ve left. [*Aside.*

2nd Niece. He comes, the false disturber of my quiet.
Now, vengeance do thy worst. [*Aside.*

Enter Don Ferolo Whiskerandos.

Whisk. O hateful liberty—if thus in vain
I seek my Tilburina!

Both Nieces. And ever shalt!

180

Sir Christopher Hatton and Sir Walter Raleigh come forward.

Sir Christ. and Sir Walt. Hold! we will avenge you.

Whisk. Hold you—or see your nieces bleed!

[The two Nieces draw their two daggers to strike Whiskerandos: the two Uncles at the instant, with their two swords drawn, catch their two Nieces' arms, and turn the points of their swords to Whiskerandos, who immediately draws two daggers, and holds them to the two Nieces' bosoms.]

Puff. There's situation for you! there's an heroic group!—You see the ladies can't stab Whiskerandos—he durst not strike them, for fear of their uncles—the uncles durst not kill him, because of their nieces—I have them all at a dead lock!—for every one of them is afraid to let go first.

Sneer. Why, then they must stand there for 190 ever!

Puff. So, they would, if I hadn't a very fine contrivance for 't.—Now mind——

“Enter Beefeater, with his halberd.

Beef. In the queen’s name I charge you all to drop
Your swords and daggers!

[*They drop their swords and daggers.*”

Sneer. That is a contrivance indeed!

Puff. Ay,—in the queen’s name.

“*Sir Christ.* Come, niece!

Sir Walter. Come, niece!

[*Exeunt with the two Nieces.*

Whisk. What’s he, who bids us thus renounce our
guard? 200

Beef. Thou must do more—renounce thy love!

Whisk. Thou liest—base Beefeater!

Beef. Ha! hell! the lie!

By Heaven thou ’st roused the lion in my heart!

Off, yeoman’s habit!—base disguise! off! off!

[*Discovers himself, by throwing off his upper dress,
and appearing in a very fine waistcoat.*

Am I a Beefeater now?

~~Or beams my crest as terrible as when~~

~~In Biscay’s Bay I took thy captive sloop?”~~

Puff. There, egad! he comes out to be the very
captain of the privateer who had taken Whisker-

andos prisoner—and was himself an old lover` 210
of Tilburina's.

Dang. Admirably managed, indeed!

Puff. Now, stand out of their way.

“*Whisk.* I thank thee, Fortune, that hast thus bestowed
A weapon to chastise this insolent.

[*Takes up one of the swords.*

Beef. I take thy challenge, Spaniard, and I thank thee,
Fortune, too! [*Takes up the other sword.*”

Dang. That's excellently contrived!—It seems as
if the two uncles had left their swords on pur-
pose for them. 220

Puff. No, egad, they could not help leaving them.

“*Whisk.* Vengeance and Tilburina!

Beef. Exactly so——

[*They fight—and after the usual number of
wounds given, Whiskerandos falls.*

Whisk. O cursèd parry!—that last thrust in tierce
Was fatal.—Captain, thou hast fencèd well!
And Whiskerandos quits this bustling scene
For all eter——

Beef. ——nity—he would have added, but
stern death

Cut short his being, and the noun at once!”

Puff. Oh, my dear sir, you are too slow: now mind me.—Sir, shall I trouble you to die again? 229

“*Whisk.* And Whiskerandos quits this bustling scene
For all eter——

Beef. ——nity—he would have added,——”

Puff. No, sir—that’s not it—once more, if you please.

Whisk. I wish, sir, you would practise this without me—I can’t stay dying here all night.

Puff. Very well; we’ll go over it by-and-by.—
[*Exit Whiskerandos.*] I must humour these gentlemen!

“*Beef.* Farewell, brave Spaniard! and when next”——

Puff. Dear sir, you needn’t speak that speech, as 240
the body has walked off.

Beef. That’s true, sir—then I’ll join the fleet.

Puff. If you please.—[*Exit Beefeater.*] Now,
who comes on?

“*Enter Governor, with his hair properly disordered.*

Gov. A hemisphere of evil planets reign!
And every planet sheds contagious frenzy!
My Spanish prisoner is slain! my daughter,

Meeting the dead corse borne along, has gone
Distract! [*A loud flourish of trumpets.*]

But hark! I am summoned to the fort:
Perhaps the fleets have met! amazing crisis! 250
O Tilburina! from thy aged father's beard
Thou'st plucked the few brown hairs which time
had left! [*Exit.*"]

Sneer. Poor gentleman!

Puff. Yes—and no one to blame but his daughter!

Dang. And the planets——

Puff. True.—Now enter Tilburina!

Sneer. Egad, the business comes on quick
here.

Puff. Yes, sir—now she comes in stark mad in
white satin. 260

Sneer. Why in white satin?

Puff. O Lord, sir—when a heroine goes mad, she
always goes into white satin.—Don't she,
Dangle?

Dang. Always—it's a rule.

Puff. Yes—here it is—[*Looking at the book.*]
“Enter Tilburina stark mad in white satin,
and her confidant stark mad in white
linen.”

“*Enter Tilburina and Confidant, mad, according to custom.*”

Sneer. But, what the deuce, is the confidant to be 270
mad too?

Puff. To be sure she is: the confidant is always to do whatever her mistress does; weep when she weeps, smile when she smiles, go mad when she goes mad.—Now, madam confidant—but keep your madness in the back-ground, if you please.

“*Tilb.* The wind whistles—the moon rises—see,
They have killed my squirrel in his cage!
Is this a grasshopper?—Ha! no; it is my 280
Whiskerandos—you shall not keep him—
I know you have him in your pocket—
An oyster may be crossed in love!—Who says
A whale’s a bird?—Ha! did you call, my love?—
He’s here! he’s there!—He’s everywhere!
Ah me! he’s nowhere! [*Exit.*”

Puff. There, do you ever desire to see any body madder than that?

Sneer. Never, while I live!

Puff. You observed how she mangled the metre? 290

Dang. Yes—egad, it was the first thing made me suspect she was out of her senses!

Sneer. And pray what becomes of her?

Puff. She is gone to throw herself into the sea, to be sure—and that brings us at once to the scene of action, and so to my catastrophe—my sea-fight, I mean.

Sneer. What, you bring that in at last?

Puff. Yes, yes—you know my play is called *The Spanish Armada*; otherwise, egad, I have no 300 occasion for the battle at all.—Now then for my magnificence!—my battle!—my noise!—and my procession!—You are all ready?

Und. Promp. [*Within.*] Yes, sir.

Puff. Is the Thames dressed?

“*Enter Thames with two Attendants.*”

Thames. Here I am, sir.

Puff. Very well, indeed!—see, gentlemen, there’s a river for you!—This is blending a little of the masque with my tragedy—a new fancy, you know—and very useful in my case; for as 310 there must be a procession, I suppose Thames, and all his tributary rivers, to compliment Britannia with a fête in honour of the victory.

Sneer. But pray, who are these gentlemen in green with him?

Puff. Those?—those are his banks.

Sneer. His banks?

Puff. Yes, one crowned with alders, and the other with a villa!—you take the allusions?—But hey! what the plague! you have got both your 320 banks on one side.—Here, sir, come round.—Ever while you live, Thames, go between your banks.—[*Bell rings.*] There, so! now for 't!—Stand aside my dear friends!—Away, Thames!

[*Exit Thames between his banks.*]

[*Flourish of drums, trumpets, cannon, &c. &c.*]

Scene changes to the sea—the fleets engage—the music plays “Britons strike home.”—Spanish fleet destroyed by fire-ships, &c.—English fleet advances—music plays “Rule Britannia.”—The procession of all the English rivers, and their tributaries, with their emblems, &c., begins with Handel’s water music, ends with a chorus, to the march in “Judas Maccabæus.”—During this scene, Puff directs and applauds every thing—then

Puff. Well, pretty well—but not quite perfect.—

So, ladies and gentlemen, if you please, we’ll rehearse this piece again to-morrow.

[*Curtain drops.*]

Notes.

To Mrs Greville. Mrs Greville—Horace Walpole's "pretty Fanny Macartney"—was the daughter of James Macartney, the wife of Fulke Greville, and the mother of Lady Crewe. She died in 1789. Her writings included an *Ode to Indifference*, and in the lines to "Mrs Crewe," prefixed to the *School for Scandal*, Sheridan wrote,

" Read in all knowledge that her sex should reach,
Though Greville, or the Muse, should deign to teach."

Prologue by the Honourable Richard Fitzpatrick. Richard Fitzpatrick, second son of John, first Earl of Upper Ossory, and Lady Evelyn Leveson Gower, was born in 1747. He entered the army in 1765, but was chiefly known for some years as a leader of fashion and bosom friend of Charles James Fox. Both the friends wrote verse, and took great interest in theatrical matters. In 1774 Fitzpatrick entered Parliament, and in 1777 served in the war in America. In 1782 he became chief secretary for Ireland; and in the following year Secretary for War. On Fox's return to power in 1806 Fitzpatrick was made Secretary for War the second time; he had already attained to the rank of lieutenant-general. In replying to one of his speeches in the House of Commons in 1796, Dundas said that Fitzpatrick's two friends (Fox and Sheridan) had only impaired the impression made by his speech. He died in 1813.

6. *When Villiers criticised.* Some account of the Duke of Buckingham's *Rehearsal* will be found in the Preface.

Act I. Scene i. 1-6. In 1778-9 there was much public excitement at the want of success in the naval warfare with the French. The Admiralty was attacked in the House of Commons, and Lord Sandwich, the First Lord of the Admiralty, escaped a vote of censure only by a narrow majority. Sir Charles Hardy was called upon to succeed Keppel in the command of the Channel Fleet in 1779, though he had retired from active service twenty years earlier. There was fear of an invasion by the French and Spanish, but Hardy warded off an engagement, and the enemy withdrew to Brest in September. Hardy died in the following year. A large encampment of militia was formed at Coxheath, near Maidstone, in July 1779, in the expectation of an invasion.

I. i. 84. *The Opera House*. Before the beginning of the season of 1778-9 there had been a coalition between the patentees of the two theatres, Drury Lane and Covent Garden, and actors were lent from one house to the other. This arrangement was the subject of a satire, *Coalition*, "a farce founded on facts," 1779.

I. i. 102-3. See *Hamlet*, III. ii. 24:—"Anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure"; and II. ii. 548: "Let them be well used; for they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time."

I. i. 306. Churchill had written (as Mr Low points out),

"Still pilfers wretched plans, and makes them worse;
Like gipsies, lest the stolen brat be known,
Defacing first, then claiming for his own."

I. i. 471. See the second part of *Henry IV.*, II. ii.

I. ii. 134 *Caduceus*. The staff or wand of Mercury.

I. ii. 234. *Mr Dodd*. James William Dodd (died 1796) created the parts of Dangle in *The Critic*, Sir Benjamin Backbite in the *School for Scandal*, and Lord Foppington in the *Trip to Scarborough*. Lamb spoke highly of his representation of Sir Andrew Aguecheek.

I. ii. 237. *Mr Palmer*. John Palmer (died 1798) was the original Joseph Surface in the *School for Scandal*. In *The Critic* he took the part of Sneer.

I. ii. 240. *Mr King*. Thomas King (1730-1805) was the first Sir Peter Teazle, and the humour of the present passage lies in the fact that he acted the part of Puff, and thus had to utter these compliments about his fellow actors in this scene, and especially himself.

I. ii. 244. *Mr De Louthembourg*. Philippe Jacques de Louthembourg (1740-1812) became a Royal Academician in 1781. He rendered great service to the stage between 1773 and 1785, in designing scenery and superintending costumes, but he quarrelled with Sheridan, who wished to reduce his salary.

I. ii. 353. *Tablature*. Lord Shaftesbury writes:—" 'Tis then, that in painting we may give to any particular work the name of tablature, when the work is in reality a single work, comprehended in one view, and formed according to one single intelligence, meaning, or design."

I. ii. 393. *Paul Jones* (1747-1792), a Scotchman, was a naval adventurer, who served in the American war against England. In the autumn of 1779 he was cruising in the North Sea, threatening Leith and the Tyne.

I. ii. 394. *John Byron*, vice-admiral (1723-1786), had two indecisive encounters with the French fleet in the West Indies in July 1779.

II. ii. 249. Handel's opera of *Ariadne*, which contains a famous minuet, was produced in 1733.

II. ii. 373 *seq.* Terms used in fencing. In *Hamlet*, V. ii. 266, Osric says, "A hit, a very palpable hit."

III. i. 88. See *Othello*, III. iii. 90.

III. i. 129. *Lord Burleigh shakes his head.* In "The Historical Register," Fielding introduced four Patriots, who met and shook hands, but said nothing:—"Sir, what they think now cannot well be spoke, but you may conjecture a great deal from their shaking their heads."

III. 1. 326. As Mr Fraser Rae points out, the procession at the end of the play would appeal to the patriotic feelings of the audience, as England was at war with France and Spain in 1779, and the enemy's fleets were cruising off our coasts.





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